

Hillandale

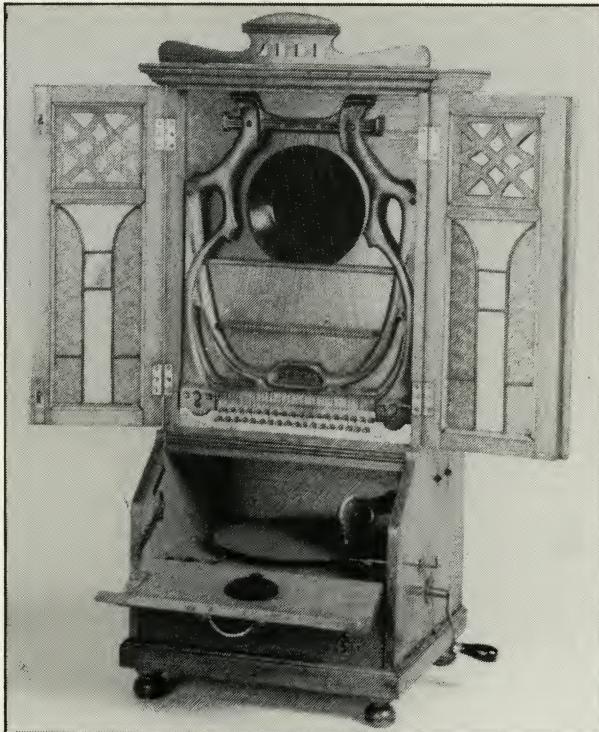
News

No 196 February 1994



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Tuesday 12 April 1994



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Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

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President: George Frow

Chairman: Dr Peter Martland

Editor: Chris Hamilton, [REDACTED] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP

Secretary: Suzanne Lewis, [REDACTED] Chesham, Bucks HP5 3JB

Treasurer: Chris Hamilton, [REDACTED] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP

Tel: [REDACTED]

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Front cover illustration: Oscar Preuss depicted in *The Gramophone* in 1931

EDITOR'S DESK



Reviews

In spite of increasing the size of our magazine to 40 pages I often run short of space. I could utilise the existing space more efficiently if the amount devoted to the review section is re-organised. With this in mind I would ask all who send me reviews of recordings or books to limit their copy to 500 words. This would help me to provide a more balanced magazine.

Annual Subscriptions

The Treasurer has reminded me that the 1994/95 subscriptions are due on the first of March. Please would you help him by renewing your subscription promptly. By doing this you will help to contain our administration costs and ensure that you continue to receive *Hillendale News* without interruption.

Anniversary

One of our members, Mr Soung-Mok Son of the Republic of Korea, has built a new museum to display his collection of phonographs and gramophones to the general public. This museum celebrated its second anniversary on November 28th last. I would like to take this opportunity to extend to Mr Soung-Mok Son and his Chamsori Gramophone and Audio Museum our best wishes and all success for the future. Members who are in the area are welcome to visit the museum at 216-4 Song Jung Dong, Kang-Reung City, Kang Won Do, Republic of Korea.

Apology

The dates of the February and March Meetings in London as printed in the last issue were incorrect and I apologise for this. The correct dates are shown correctly in this issue's Forthcoming Meetings column on page 407.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillendale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the April issue will be **15th February 1994**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

OSCAR PREUSS - AN ADMIRABLE MAN

by George Frow

On 31st March 1955 a celebration took place at the Park Lane Hotel, London, when the directors of E.M.I. Ltd. entertained their Recording Manager Oscar Preuss on the eve of his retirement from the Gramophone Record Industry where he had been since 1904, apart from the Great War years. As a boy of 15 he had joined the Odeon Company as an apprentice in recording.

Oscar Carl Preuss was born in London on November 14th 1889 in the Grays Inn Road area, a busy part-business part-residential street running from Holborn to King's Cross and intersecting Clerkenwell Road where the offices of the British gramophone industry would later cluster. He was the youngest of a family of three brothers and two sisters and attended local schools. Their father had run away from Germany when he was twelve, settling in London and eventually marrying a girl whose surname was White. It seems likely that the family was drawn to working in the theatre.

In an era when most boys interested themselves in keeping pets or following one of the handiwork vogues of the day, young Oscar was attracted to the recording and reproduction of sound. During the school holidays opportunities occurred to go along to the studios of the recently-established Odeon Company in Hamsell Street, E.C.1 with the baritone Ian Colquhoun (John Manifold) when he made recordings. Colquhoun had married Preuss's elder sister Lottie Emma in 1902 when both had been appearing at the Alhambra Theatre in Leicester Square. Soon Preuss joined the record company as an apprentice, though

his first job was sweeping up the studio for nine shillings a week.

By 1909 he had taken over from Arthur Brooks as recorder for The International Talking Machine Company Ltd. with artists of the standing of Emmy Destinn, Jan Kubelik, G. Mario Sammarco on the Fonotipia label and George Formby Sr. for Jumbo. By coincidence 25 years later he would be the first recorder for Formby's son for the Regal Zonophone label, and with a daily life never very far from the recording lathe worked with every type of musical combination and composition. Unfortunately his recording books no longer exist, otherwise we might learn if the Odeon issue of the first large-scale orchestral recording in 1909 was at Preuss's instigation. This was 8 sides of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite* played by the Palace Theatre Orchestra and was an early album set sold for 16 shillings. Preuss also experimented with variable pitch grooves.

There is a story that in 1910 when he was 21 he was sent to Germany to make some recordings. His youthful looks caused the German office to cable London "Why send boy?" and London's answer was "Leave everything to Preuss". He made a point of becoming fluent in French, German and Italian for these trips, although surprisingly German had never been spoken at home among the family.

His Odeon years were productive and in 1910 Preuss took off for Tunis and Algiers on his first programme of recording Arab music. Many years afterwards a report of this trip drew from Fred Gaisberg, his



Oscar Preuss at his retirement party, March 1955.

opposite number in The Gramophone Company Ltd., the boast in *The Gramophone* magazine of April 1928 to have taken his first recordings in the east in 1902, landing in Yokohama on New Year's Day 1903 and making 600 sides in Calcutta alone. As a youngster at Odeon Preuss could also remember the youthful John McCormack calling in to the studio to record a series of Irish songs while on his way to Milan for voice training with Sabatini, father of the novelist. These records could still be bought with the Regal label up to the 1939-1945 war. McCormack was paid a guinea a side.

Shortly after the war broke out in 1914, Preuss then aged 24 volunteered and was sent to France in the infantry with the 47th Division. He was wounded in the next year, brought home and became an inspector in an aircraft factory. One whom he had got to know in the trenches with the 47th was Charlie Clapham, and years later Preuss would record him with his partner Billy Dwyer in comedy sketches for Parlophone.

During the war he married Cecilia Burgess and they had three daughters. After she died he married her sister Mollie and a daughter was born. The war finished in 1918 and brought a general desire to get back to 'business as usual' as soon as possible and in the next year he was engaged by Columbia as a recording engineer, taking on all types of music as it came along to build up the catalogue.

Several years before the war Carl Lindström AG had taken over The International Talking Machine Company and by 1923 considered that anti-German feelings in Britain had receded sufficiently to open up the original business at Hertford. Paul Offenbacher was sent over to estimate the possibilities. Though Offenbacher had been a director before the war aliens were still restrained from holding Board positions, but he recruited Preuss as recording engineer and artists manager at 77 City Road and

Hertford, as well as some former staff. With his British passport Preuss was the Company's only recording engineer free to work abroad. Thus the Parlophone Company Ltd. was established with the first list of records appearing in October 1923 and an address now at 85 City Road, London.

Parlophone had 7 recording studios around the world and Preuss travelled widely in search of material. He recalled long dusty desert journeys by car with recording apparatus strapped to its body, and being stranded for two long weeks in Aleppo waiting for a camel train to bring in waxes that had gone astray, and he had many stories of the local artistes being difficult to handle. He particularly enjoyed working in Berlin and Milan. Partly as a result of trips to the Middle East and elsewhere and by judicious importing of masters there appeared in the 1920s and 1930s series like *Music of all Nations*, *Music of the Orient*, *2,000 Years of Music* and *Tangoes from Buenos Aires*. The so-called *Race Series* featured negro soloists or small bands. He made recordings on four continents, quite an achievement in the days before air travel.

In anticipation of Parlophone going over to electrical recording a studio at Carlton Hill, St. John's Wood, London was rented. This had been a chapel, then a sculptor's studio. It was a cavernous building with a 28ft. high ceiling.

The 20s were a period of mergers and change in the industry and in 1927 Parlophone became identified with Columbia, who had a studio at Petty France, Westminster. Columbia had bought a controlling interest in Lindström and pressing of Parlophone records started at the Columbia factory at Wandsworth using the laminated process. The Hertford works were disposed of in April 1928, although Parlophone was always regarded as a sideline label, perhaps because of its German origins, and

this continued after the big 1931 merger with The Gramophone Company Ltd. that produced E.M.I. Ltd. However there remained divided loyalties between HMV and Columbia and for a number of years there were those on both sides who would not speak to one another.

During the 1939-1945 war there was some anti-German feeling against the Parlophone Company and blocks of central European records were slashed from its catalogue, leaving Richard Tauber as its mainstay performer. He was now established in Britain and ironically on the Parlophone-Odeon label and the company was known internally as 'Tauberphone'.

Oscar Preuss was personally responsible for recruiting and recording many of Parlophone's principal artistes: Jan Kiepura and Marta Eggerth, the comediettes Elsie and Doris Waters publicly 'recognized' his discovery of them, as did their brother Jack Warner, Victor Silvester's Orchestra, the Harry Roy, Joe Daniels and Harry Parry bands, Jimmy Shand, Robert Wilson, Raie da Costa and 'Hutch', and not forgetting the 'records only' Organ, Dance Band and Me. Eileen Joyce approached him to make a private piano recording and was invited to come in and record professionally, and Humphrey Lyttleton and Johnnie Dankworth featured prominently in the *Rhythm Series*. Ronald Frankau had appeal for the tired business man and his stories were lifted from the records by many an after-dinner speaker. From another direction Compton Mackenzie brought Father Sydney MacEwan's singing ability to Preuss's attention for possible recording, leading to an extensive, profitable and pleasant portfolio of 10" Parlophones (and later Columbias), a number being sung in Gaelic.

The Luton Girls' Choir was a Parlophone leader for many years and used to come to make their records at Abbey Road Studios in the evenings. Preuss had a knack with

children's choirs and two others who made a big mark under the label were the Kirkintilloch Junior and the Oberkirchen whose *Happy Wanderer* is still remembered. On a classical note the London Baroque Ensemble was formed to record in 1950 under the refugee conductor and arranger Karl Haas, and employed leading London wind-players in rarely heard 17th and 18th Century music; and a series of brilliant 78 Parlophones appeared from Preuss's management. Several LPs would follow and later, strings were added and an Orchestra and String Orchestra featured.

During the 1940s he was working at Abbey Road with Walter Legge, David Bicknell, Joe Batten and Wally Moody, and was described in *John Bull* as "The Greatest Gambler in the Disc Business". One of his gambles that nearly failed was to record the music from the British film *While I Live* without seeing it, and making a huge pressing of records. He later described the film as the worst he had seen for a long time, but the theme music was re-named *Dream of Olwen* and over a quarter of a million records were sold.

After the last war he made a visit to Winston Churchill at Chartwell to present him with a set of records of vintage stage and popular songs contributed freely by performers and staff of the whole record industry. Afterwards the great statesman remarked that he found Oscar Preuss an admirable man.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s he was living at Bromley in Kent, but early in the war moved further out to Fawkham where he became a parish councillor as well as an officer in the Home Guard and still made the daily journey to London in the hard conditions of the time. He moved to Hampstead, North London around 1950 where he was nearer to the studios at Abbey Road, and retired in 1955 as E. M. I.'s Senior Recording and Artistes' Manager and became a consultant to Rank Recordings.



Oscar Preuss has a word in Joe Batten's ear at the latter's retirement party in 1951, while Mrs Batten and Fred Gaisberg look on



George Martin makes a presentation at Oscar Preuss' retirement party in March 1955

George Martin, who had been his assistant for 5 years, took over and in a tribute to 'my own dear mentor who had taught me so much' said Oscar Preuss had a young approach, was tremendously alive and adopted rebellious tactics. Martin's first comedy performer was Peter Ustinov, then Peter Sellers and soon the Parlophone label passed into the age of the Beatles and things were never quite the same.

Oscar Preuss died in the London Hospital on Christmas Eve 1958 at the age of 69.

Acknowledgements:

In compiling this article I have been much helped by:

Mrs Berry Tulloch (daughter), who also loaned the photographs,

Ruth Edge and Suzanne Lewis of E.M.I. Music Ltd.'s Archives,

Frank Andrews's article on Fonotipia in *Talking Machine Review* No.49b, 1977,

and by articles in:

The Gramophone, March 1928, pp.411-2

The Gramophone (Radio and Music) Critic, March 1931, p.180

The Sound Wave, February 1932,

and also consulted:

Abbey Road by Brian Southall, published by Patrick Stephens, 1982



Oscar Preuss and Father Sydney MacEwan en route to America on R.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*

AGNES DUNCAN and THE GLASGOW ORPHEUS CHOIR

by Robert Rankine

Among the survivors from the acoustic age we should include Glasgow's **Agnes Duncan**. The possessor of a fine contralto voice Agnes was for many years chorister and soloist with the famed *Glasgow Orpheus Choir* (1901-1951): in parallel she was conductor of the *Scottish Junior Singers*, also Glasgow-based. This junior choir was much in demand for concert work, and by radio, television and for recording until Agnes retired. Agnes Duncan's earliest solo recordings were made in 1923 for Aeolian/Beltona.

The first Glasgow Orpheus Choir recordings, by Aeolian/Beltona, also date from around 1923. Apparently the four departments of the 80-strong choir were required to sing, simultaneously, each into separate recording horns. One can imagine each group of choristers crowding in front of their respective horn, trying to keep an eye on the conductor whilst, simultaneously, either moving back to prevent blasting at the loud passages or edging nearer to singing pianissimo. One can listen to the result on records which will forever remain curiosities of early choral recording.

Readers may be interested to know Sir Hugh S Robertson's reaction to these early acoustic recordings of his Glasgow Orpheus Choir. Writing in the October 1923 issue of the Choir's house magazine *The Lute*, he said:

"If the gramophone people could only learn the trick of choral recording! We are certain it can never be done satisfactorily by separate parts singing into separate funnels where the least deviation in dimensions is bound to affect pitch, and where voices of different timbre are bound to have differences exaggerated and the ensemble destroyed. Until a choir can be treated as an organisation and taken en bloc, it would be better to leave choral recording alone..."

What was the reaction of the record buying public to the acoustic records of this choir? The November 1926 issue of *The Gramophone* carries a letter from W.T.E. Condell of Kilkenny who writes "...I venture to subjoin a list of seven records totalling £1. Many of these, as readers will recognise, have in the first instance been suggested by *The Gramophone* reviews, but I make no apology for drawing attention to them again, on account of the really marvellous value they give...." Included in Mr Condell's list is the Glasgow Orpheus Choir recording of Holst's arrangement of a Hampshire folk-song *The Song of the Blacksmith*.

As *Hillendale* readers know, by 1924 the demands of the burgeoning broadcasting stations and of the progressive but silent film industry had ensured the development of the invention of recording by electric microphone. Overnight, it seemed, choirs and orchestras could be successfully recorded not only in the studio but also in the concert hall: recording engineers could now transport their new apparatus, setting-up in concert hall, theatre or church as the occasion demanded.

Hugh Robertson's disappointment with the results of choral recording by the acoustic method may be compared with Compton Mackenzie's judgement of the first of the Orpheus Choir's electrical recordings just two and a half years later for on 25th October 1925 HMV recorded at its Hayes "B" studio the first of a long series of electrical recordings by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. From this first group of HMV records Compton Mackenzie wrote in the April 1926 issue of *The Gramophone* (p504) "One more record I must mention, and that is the *Eriskay Love Lilt* sung by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. This is supremely beautiful. Let me cut myself free from superlatives before I expire."

The Glasgow Orpheus Choir's final HMV recording session (its first on magnetic tape) took place in Glasgow in May 1951 just a month before that world famous Choir disbanded on the retirement of its conductor Sir Hugh Robertson, then aged 77 years.

Agnes Duncan:

<i>The Auld Hoose</i>	Lady Nairn: trad arr Diack	Matrix C5961	ACO G15366 Beltona 325
<i>Caller Herrin'</i>	Lady Nairn: Neil Gow	Matrix C5955	ACO G15366 Beltona 326

The Glasgow Orpheus Choir:

<i>The Song of the Blacksmith</i>	Holst	Matrix C5814	ACO G15364 Beltona 245
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A Hampshire folk-song collected by G.B.Gardiner and arranged by Holst:

'For the blacksmith courted me, nine months and better,
And first he won my heart, till he wrote to me a letter,
And with his hammer in his hand, for he strikes so mighty and clever,
He makes the sparks to fly all around his middle.'

'Gustav von Holst has made of this amusingly ingenuous bit of folk-art a *tour de force* of syncopation. In the song it is not clear whether the blacksmith was as constant as he ought to have been, nor does it matter; he could evidently swing his hammer to some tune. It only remains to be said that it is much easier to syncopate with a hammer than with a multiple of voices.'

(Programme note by H.S.Roberton)

<i>The Eriskay Love Lilt</i>	Kennedy-Fraser arr Robertson (Recorded 1925, issued 1926, deleted June 1950)	Matrix Bb7055-2	HMV E409
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HELP!

For some time now, Bill Triggs and I have been working on a combined Vocalion matrix listing, covering as much as we possibly can of all records made in New York and London between 1917 and 1927. To do this accurately, and presentably, we need to have details of EVERY record made by this most interesting company, no matter how limited its interest (we have the "Brunswick" products of 1925 onwards, but need the British recordings from beginning to end). We are also covering the British labels pressed by Vocalion, such as: Aco, Beltona, Citizen, Coliseum, Duophone, Guardsman, Homochord, Ludgate, Meloto, Scala and Tower. Especially urgently wanted are fullest details of vertical-cut Aeolian Vocalions of 1917-1919. The matrix number is there if only you can see it! (Usually under the left-hand segment of the label design).

Will you please help us? We've covered so much ground; just a little further to go, and we'll be there - so dig out those ornate Vocalions and let us know what you've found.

Brian Rust, [REDACTED] Swanage, Dorset SH19 1LN.

FRED VAN EPS and his RECORDING BANJO

by Pat Doyle

Prologue

Older members may recall that on April 19th 1968 the late Tom Edwards gave us an evening at the *Horse and Groom* of banjo music played on one of Fred Van Eps's banjos and talked about the artist whom he knew at the end of his life. Our contributor is Pat Doyle who has interested himself in Van Eps's life and has contributed a short and welcome article on the way he constructed his instruments. More than any other player Fred Van Eps designed his instruments to suit the early limited recording system and was wise enough to retire to his engineering workshop when fashions changed. He left a substantial legacy of recordings on many labels and in his later years was awarded several United States patents for advances in recording engineering. The writer Pat Doyle, himself a distinguished banjo player and teacher, is a friend of the Van Eps family and has worked to ensure that Fred's extensive correspondence relating to his banjo and recording career is not lost and represents a trust for this in this country, possessing several original instruments and fascinating early documents.

G.F.

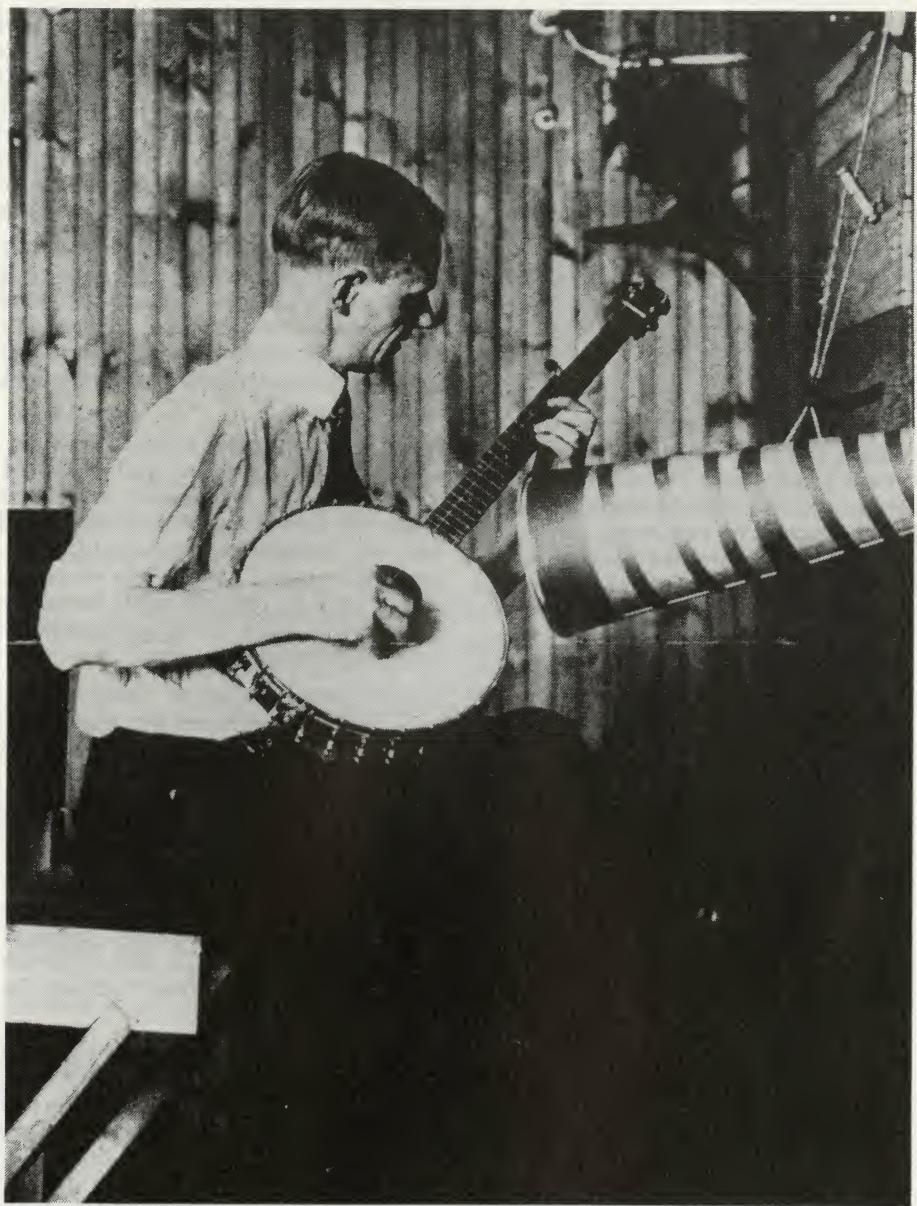
Apart from being well known as a superb artist of the 5-string banjo, accomplished arranger and the maker of a great many excellent banjo recordings, Fred Van Eps (1878-1960) was also a supremely talented, innovative engineer and instrument maker.

Based on his boyhood training in the family watchmaking 'shop', Fred Van Eps was able to fashion banjos to his own exacting specifications, having found commercially available instruments wanting in areas of construction quality, dimensions and tone/volume.

With the exception of a few detail changes, the essential specification and dimensions of the Van Eps Banjo were established before the turn of the century and stayed that way throughout; with a 28½" scale length from nut to bridge (from where the strings leave the peghead to the centre line of the bridge) and a 12" vellum/soundboard on an open backed hoop/body.

There were two significant design innovations which FVE perfected and incorporated in his banjos; these were the 'Van Eps Recording Banjo' and the 'Flush Fret Banjo'. This latter term refers to replacing ordinary raised frets with a rectangular strip set flush with the ebony fingerboard which was then slightly scalloped between each fret position. Only in the hands of an advanced player does such a refinement prove an advantage and none was able to demonstrate this more vividly than Fred Van Eps himself.

Patented on January 4th 1921 (filed January 28th 1920), the Van Eps Recording Banjo represented a radical change from the standard open back instrument and, pre-dating the Flush Fret types, appeared at a time when Fred Van Eps was still actively engaged in recording work with his Van Eps Trio and Quartet.



Fred Van Eps recording in the Starr studio in New York.
He devised this playing position as the perfect stance for the 5-string banjo.

Quantity production was a further departure from the previously (and subsequent) home-made banjos, a corporation was formed in partnership with Henry Burr called the Van Eps Burr Corporation of 1658, Broadway, New York. A fellow artist from the Eight Victor Artists, Henry Burr supplied additional funding and 'marketing' services. Sales and distribution was undertaken by Lyon and Healey of Chicago via their retail/wholesale network, though this did not prevent Fred Van Eps from making 'private' sales.

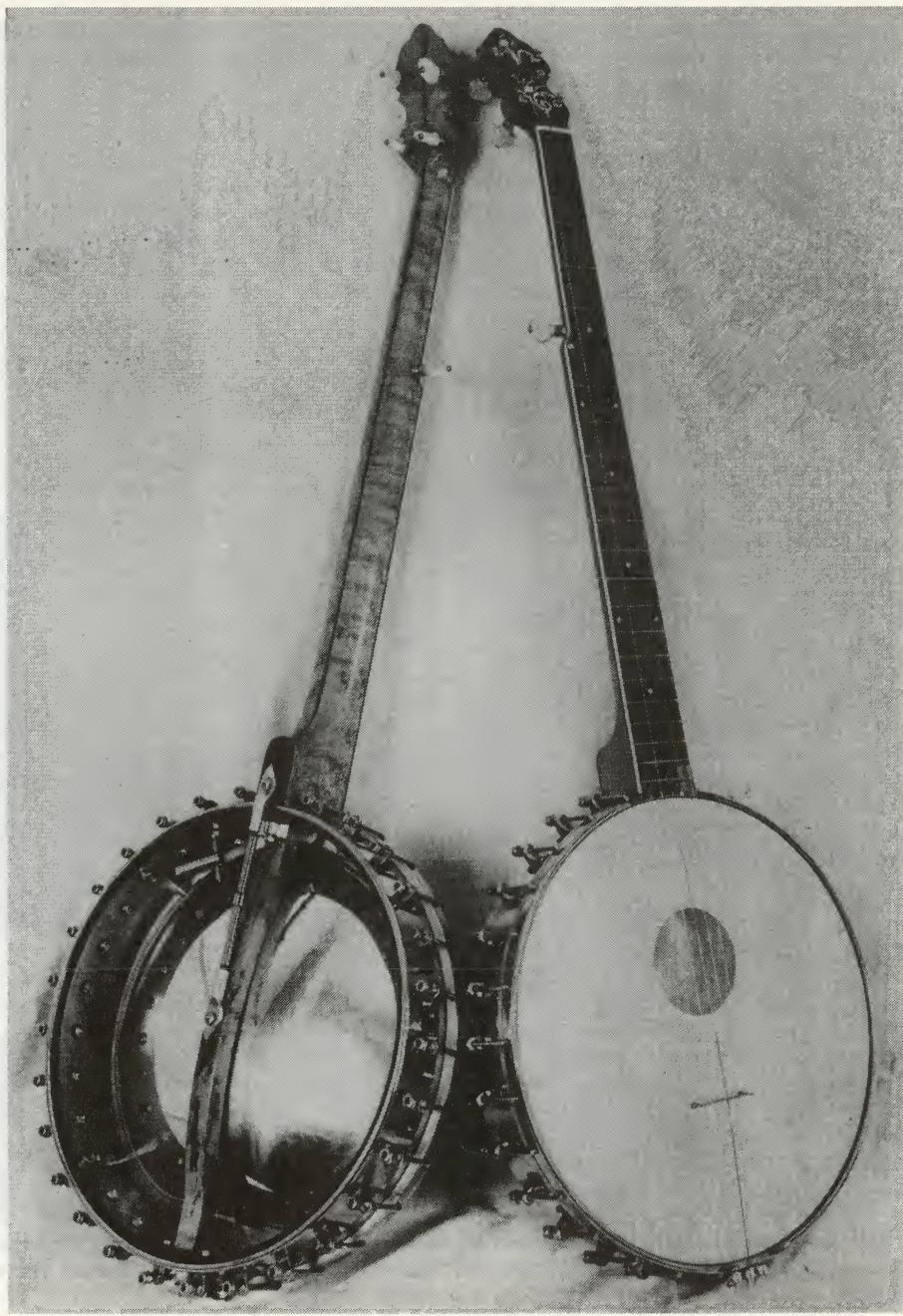
In basic construction the Recording banjo followed standard practice of a shaped neck/arm passing into attached to a circular hoop/body. Supported in the hoop by four curved legs, a circular alloy bowl collected the sound vibrations and reflected them through an offset $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch hole in the vellum soundboard (similar to a Spanish guitar soundhole). The bowl had a slightly flattened rear edge to better support the vellum from pressure exerted by the bridge; its bowl shape was biased forward to cope with the offset hole while its upper edge replaced the standard tone-ring. Hole position, vellum thickness/hardness were unchanging features of these unique instruments while the alloy bowls (sometimes plated brass) varied in diameter, depth and profile, each variation effecting tone and volume to some degree.

In comparison with contemporary instruments, Van Eps banjos sported the bare minimum of decoration, tone and construction quality being top priority. Contrary to the impressive corporate impression, manufacture was still very much home brewed. Three distinct instruments were presented in the detailed sales catalogue, 5-string (plucked with the bare fingers), Plectrum and Tenor banjos (played with a pick/ plectrum). One could well gain the impression that Fred Van Eps played the plectrum instruments advertised but this was not so: his talented son George coped with that area.

By virtue of its basic construction, the ordinary open-back banjo cannot totally project its volume forward and numerous instruments appeared fitted with rear resonators mounted on the back of the hoop which projected the sound forward via holes or slots in the outer extended flange. The Van Eps Recording banjo was more directional in output by virtue of the single hole thus ensuring that most of the sound went into the horn.

In discarding his standard instrument for recording in favour of the somewhat theoretical advantages of the louder and more directional Recording banjo, Van Eps may have felt the need to redress the balance of being rather 'outgunned' by his fellow musicians. Properly set up, all Van Eps banjos share a distinctive crisp sound, Recording banjos being no exception, though their soundchamber lessened the pure staccato effect while producing a more sustained note. One must obviously bow to the superior 'banjorial' knowledge Fred Van Eps possessed, though it is difficult to credit his fascinating design with the volume and acoustic advantages claimed; indeed his standard type Van Eps banjo used almost exclusively in recording work from 1907 which he fondly called the 'Meal Ticket' has greatly superior volume and tone, in the opinion of this writer.

Having reached a peak of popularity at least some ten years prior to the introduction of the recording Banjo, the old 5-string instrument was fast being replaced by its steel strung pick-played offspring which were firmly ensconced in orchestra rhythm sections. High demand for orthodox resonated tenor and plectrum banjos from rival makers, such as Vega, Paramount, Gibson and Bacon & Day, coupled with the existing decline in popularity of the 5-string banjo made the Recording banjo almost obsolete before it appeared. The replacement of acoustic recording in favour of electronic techniques was the final and most telling nail in its coffin.



The Van Eps 5-string Recording banjo showing the reflecting bowl

Even though its primary purpose had ceased to exist, Fred Van Eps continued to use the Recording banjo well into the 20s even to the point of introducing new construction and decorative features. He had reverted to the orthodox instrument by 1928 or so.

By the late 20s Lyon and Healey were 'closing out' their stocks of Recording banjos and offering generous terms and cut prices to would-be purchasers.

Combined with declining banjo work and the economic depression in the U.S.A., the Van Eps Burr Corporation could no longer exist and quietly went out of business. Fred Van Eps embarked on a new venture in engineering for the radio and recording industry which he continued up to his death on

November 22nd 1960 and to the exclusion of professional banjo playing. He did produce a set of three 78s issued privately in 1952 (1954 in the U.K.) and a 12" LP in 1956; both issues came out on his own 5-string Banjo label. Banjo manufacture was confined to very limited output of his superb Flush Fret models which are highly prized by players and collectors today.

A good many Recording banjos survive today though few retain their reflector bowl and pierced vellum having converted to standard specification with orthodox tone-rings, their curved dowel stick to clear the bowl making them easily identified. Fred Van Eps retained his own example plus some experimental bowls which are housed today in a private collection.

Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

February 17th	<i>Point of Sale</i> - Ruth Lambert will present some shop advertisements and counter display cabinets from her own collection of the gramophone's most popular accessory - the needle and its container the needle tin
March 17th	<i>It is not what it purports to be</i> - with Chris Hamilton (A look at some attempts at transferring 78 recordings to Audio Cassette, LP and CD)
April 21st	Norman White from Nimbus Records will let us hear some of the latest re-issues in Nimbus' <i>Prima Voce</i> Series of CDs
May 19th	<i>The Remastering Voice</i> - Andrew Walter of EMI will talk about his work on transferring 78rpm recordings to CD
June 16th	Bridget Duckenfield, the author of <i>O Lovely Knight</i> , will talk on <i>The Many Sides of Landon Ronald</i>

MORE PERSONALITIES BEHIND THE NAMES ON THE LABELS - Part 5

by Frank Andrews

No.29 Edward Davies (tenor)

was born near Swansea, Wales. In his youth he won many prizes for singing at various Eisteddfods. His ability earned him a place in the Carl Rosa Opera Company, as a second tenor, but he was quickly promoted to leading tenor.

While singing in a production of Gounod's *Faust*, in Oxford, a kind friend offered to pay for a year's study in Milan, Italy. Taking up this offer he went to Italy where he studied under Signor Moretti. Substantial progress in his art earned him public appearances at the Conservatoire in Milan and at local theatres.

Back in Britain he sang at many of the foremost English concerts and festivals. Edward Davies' voice could be heard on Ariel Grand Records, Edison 2-minute Cylinders, Favorite Records, Jumbo Records, Sterling Gold Moulded Cylinders and Zono-phone Records - The Twin.

No.30 James Davis (tenor)

was London-born (May 9th 1878). He was educated at Dulwich College and, on taking up a living, became a bank clerk, playing in his bank's amateur orchestra for four years.

He began studying music at The Guildhall School of Music in London under two tutors, Gustave Garcia and Mr F. Walker. He won the Goldsmith Scholarship and the Leatherseller's Scholarship as well as many special prizes.

His first public appearance as a singer was at a Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Queen's Hall, London in 1904. He was invited to appear again in the following two

seasons. During some period he also enjoyed appearing at the Saturday Popular Concerts held in the St.James' Hall, Regent Street, London's principal concert hall.

He was also the principal tenor of the Choir of St.Paul's Cathedral. He was appointed in 1904 but resigned in 1906 due to the pressure of his numerous engagements. He sang with most of the principal choral societies throughout Britain.

His name appears on the following labels: Edison Bell Disc Records, Curry British Made Gramophone Records (stencilled Edison Bell), Homophone Records, Neophone Records, Odeon Records, Pathé Discs (of both varieties) and twin Double-Sided Records.

No.31 Harry Dearth (bass)

born in London in 1876, was educated at St.Mark's College and went on to the Royal College of Music for his musical training. It was in the Marlborough Hall, Regent Street that Dearth made his first public appearance. That was in 1894.

He frequently sang as a soloist with the Royal Choral Society's Concerts and at many of the foremost concerts given throughout the country, over many years. For quite some time he was also a 'Vicar Choral' at Westminster Abbey - a position designated only within the Anglican Church.

He successfully carried off operatic rôles at His Majesty's Theatre and at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, during the Thomas Beecham and English Opera seasons at those venues. His recreational activities were devoted to the game of golf.

His recordings can be collected on Gramophone Concert and Gramophone Monarch Records, HMV, Odeon, Pathé, Sterling Gold Moulded, Edison Bell Sterling Cylinders and Zonophone Record - The Twin.

No.32 Teresa (Clothilde) Del Riego (Composer/Singer)

(real name Mrs Leadbitter) was born in London in 1876 where she also died in 1968.

During her fifty years devoted to composition she wrote over 300 songs, the most famous of which was *O Dry Those Tears*. She also composed more ambitious works which went generally unperformed.

Del Riego recorded her own *O Dry Those Tears* for The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. in December 1905 (matrix 3192e). This was allocated a Gramophone Concert Record number 3648 but the disc was not issued and the matrix destroyed. If test pressings ever found their way out of the Hanover factory or the City Road headquarters then one could possibly collect a very rare record indeed.

No.33 Maurice D'Oisly (tenor)

was born on the 21st November 1882 at Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent. He was educated at Wellingborough Grammar School and the Collège de Bois in France, where he studied music under M. Maurice Noel.

Back in London, he studied pianoforte at The Royal Academy of Music under Tobias Mathay and singing under Fred King. His operatic debut was at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in January 1909 where he performed the rôle of David in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

He acted as principal tenor with the Quinlan Opera Company during its world tour of 1913-14. He had already appeared in the Glasgow Orchestral Concert Seasons of 1910 and 1911; at the Ostend Kursaal,

Belgium in 1911; at the Hallé Concerts in Manchester during 1911 and 1912 and with the Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concerts during the same years.

He claimed his favourite operatic rôle was Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*. I know of D'Oisly being found only on Odeon records, Ariel Concert Records and Columbia Records.

No.34 Pauline Donald (soprano)

(real name Lightstone) was born on March 5th 1884 according to my reference; but Ed Moogk, in his book *Roll Back The Years*, says that she was born in 1882 and died in 1970. Her birthplace was Montreal, Quebec, Canada and she was educated there at McGill's Royal Victoria College where she took her first lessons in music. She later went to Paris where she studied under M. Edmond Duvernoy of the Paris Conservatoire. Having no money for his fees for her two years of study she paid him her debts after her career was launched.

Her first public appearance came on December 30th 1904 in Nice as Manon in a production of Massenet's *Manon*. From that date she took part in principal engagements at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She sang the part of Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen* in her American début at the Manhattan Opera House, New York in May 1905.

After singing at the Opéra Comique, Paris in 1907 she eventually married the French tenor M. Seveilhac, whom she later divorced, and then she married the Danish singer Mischa Leon.

She made records for The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. but her November 1907 recording would only have Gramophone Company and Sister Companies on the labels. Only Gramophone Concert and Monarch Records are known (or their foreign label equivalents, including the Cana-

dian labels of the Berliner Gramophone Co. of Canada Ltd. Later pressings are with HMV labels, including the Archive Series and an issue by the American Gramophone Society. Her favourite rôles were as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* and Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème*. She took her name from Sir Donald A. Smith, the founder of the Royal Victoria College, who later became Lord Strathcona. One source states that 'Donald' was a local term used for the students of the college at Montreal, after its founder. Moogk says she was encouraged by Sir Donald, which is why she took his name.

No.35 Charles Draper (clarinet)

He was born in Odcombe, Somerset on 23rd October 1869 and was coached in the clarinet by his brother Paul until he gained an open scholarship to the Royal College of Music for a period of five years.

His first professional appearance was at the age ten at Penarth in Wales in 1879. For two years he was principal clarinettist at the Crystal Palace Concert Seasons in south London. He was also engaged as first clarinet with the (London) Philharmonic orchestral concerts, the Leeds Festival and the Three Choirs Festivals orchestras.

He was one of the founders of the New Symphony Orchestra (which made many recordings) and he was Professor of Music at both the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music. He was also a member of His Majesty the King's Private Band. He was the first to perform Stanford's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* at a Philharmonic Concert in London.

He recorded for many different companies but the repertoire being limited resulted in a small number recordings for each label. He is to be found on Clarion Gold Moulded Cylinders, Columbia Records, Edison Bell Cylinders, Favorite Records, Berliner, Gramophone Records, Gramophone Concert Records, Gramophone Monarch Records, HMV Records, Homophone

Records, John Bull Records, Jumbo records, London Records (cylinders of Edison-Bell Consolidated Phonograph Co. Ltd.), Lambert Gold Moulded Cylinders, Marathon Records, New Century Cylinders, Phonograph Manufacturing Coy. Cylinders and Zonophone Records.

No.36 John Dunn (violin)

was born in Hull, Yorkshire on 16th February 1866. He was privately educated with his first musical instructions coming from his brother, who was the leader of the orchestra in the Hull Theatre.

At the age of 12 he was sent to the Leipzig Conservatorium in Germany when he had tuition in violin playing from Henry Schraderick and tuition for harmony and counterpoint from Ernst F. Richter (who died in 1879) and a Herr Jadassohn. He stayed in Leipzig until he was fifteen years old.

He made his first public appearance in Hull in 1875 at a Baker Street Holiday Evening Concert (he was only nine years old). After his studies at Leipzig his first London appearance was at a Royal Opera House Promenade Concert at Covent Garden in 1882. He subsequently played at most of the foremost concert-giving venues including concerts organised by the London Philharmonic Society.

He was the first to introduce Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* to London audiences, which established him and earned him the recognition of being one of the leading violinists at that time - a distinction he maintained for some years. He gave recitals in Berlin and Leipzig and in 1914 toured Canada and the U.S.A. He composed a *Violin Concerto* of his own, along with other pieces, and composed cadenzas for Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*. Cycling and walking were his pastimes.

His recordings came out on the Odeon Record and Edison Bell Velvet Face Record labels.

No. 37 Spencer Dyke (violinist)

(full name Edward Spencer Dyke) was born in St.Austell, Cornwall on 22nd July 1880. At the age of ten he won a silver medal for violin playing. This was presented to him by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg. At the age of 17 he won the Dove Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music where he studied under Hans Wessely, who being Vienna-trained, had joined the staff in 1888.

Dyke won the 'R. A. M. Club Prix' and on leaving the establishment in 1901 was made an Associate Member. Later he was appointed a professor at the R. A. M.

He appeared at the principal London concerts and had a large teaching connection. He edited many classical compositions for the violin and studies used in teaching.

He was a member of the Wessely String Quartet and later formed his own Spencer Dyke Quartet.

He recorded for Aeolian Vocalion, Odeon, National Gramophonic Society and Vocalion Records.

To be continued

1994/95 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE: £12 for UK and EUROPE and £13 or US \$25 for Worldwide (outside Europe)

Cheques and money orders made payable to C.L.P.G.S. should be sent to Chris Hamilton, Hon.Treasurer, [REDACTED] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP, U.K.

LOCAL TREASURERS and SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENTS IN LOCAL CURRENCY:

It is vital that such members send their subscriptions to the local treasurers by 5th March 1994 so that their names can be included in the April mailing list. Those who fail to do this should send their subscriptions direct to Chris Hamilton, Hon.Treasurer C.L.P.G.S., [REDACTED] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP, United Kingdom

Scandinavia: Mr Tom Valle, [REDACTED] Oslo 10, Norway

Amount: 120 Norwegian Kroner

Australia: Mr Barry Badham, [REDACTED] Pymble, NSW 2073, Australia

Amount: 30 Australian Dollars

New Zealand: Mrs Jacqueline H. Sutcliffe, [REDACTED] Nr. Wellington,
New Zealand

Amount: 38 New Zealand Dollars

France: Marc Monneraye, [REDACTED] 94100 Saint Maur, France

Amount: 96 Francs

Would all members please pay their subscriptions by the 5th March 1994. Late payments can cause a lot of extra work and expense (which is reflected in the Society's costs) and delays delivery of the magazine to the late payers.



Saturday April 16th 1994, 10am to 4pm
at Fairfields School,
Trinity Avenue, Northampton

Stalls at £12 each can be booked by letter with cheques payable to C.L.P.G.S.
Apply to Ruth Lambert, [REDACTED] Weston Favell, Northampton. Tel: [REDACTED]
Please include S.A.E. for full details, including map, nearer the time

C.L.P.G.S. MIDLANDS GROUP

are holding a *RECORD FAYRE* on **Saturday 19th February 1994** at the **METHODIST COMMUNITY HALL** (adjacent to the Central Hall Methodist Church), **Ablewell Street, Walsall**.

ITEMS ON SALE:

Gramophones; phonographs; spares; cylinders; records (all types and speeds); vintage wirelesses; associated literature and needle tins etc.

STALLS:

A few available at £10 each.

GENERAL ADMISSION:

50p per head; O.A.P.s and children 25p each.

OPEN:

Stall holders at 9am - General public at 10am to 4pm.

PARKING:

Limited space in private yard by hall; nearby municipal car parks and restricted street parking.

LOCATION:

From J7 of M6 take main A34 Birmingham road into Walsall. This leads into Ablewell Street. 5 minutes walk from Walsall Railway Station.

REFRESHMENTS will be on sale in the hall. Local pubs nearby.

STALL ENQUIRIES:

Contact - Wal Fowler, Tel: [REDACTED] or Geoff Howl, Tel: [REDACTED]



An EMG Mk.10 "Oversize" Gramophone, English,
circa 1947. Estimate: £2,500-3,500.

MECHANICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

3RD MARCH 1994

Closing date for entries for this sale is 7th January 1994.

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EDWARD BROKE EVANS' VISIT TO HAYES

by Lester Smith

The Hon. Edward Broke Evans gave the Magic Lantern Society a very interesting account of Captain Scott's tragic expedition to the Antarctic in 1911-12 at that Society's 3-day convention in London on 17th April 1993. His father, Lieutenant 'Teddy' Evans, was Scott's second-in-command. To accompany Scott and his men to the South Pole, the Gramophone Company Ltd. presented them with an HMV Senior Monarch gramophone and over 400 records. (According to diaries kept by members of the expedition it gave them many hours of pleasure.) It was later recovered from one of the base camps and returned to the Gramophone Company Ltd. and is now proudly on display in the foyer of EMI's factory (formerly HMV) at Hayes, Middlesex. After his lecture I told Mr Broke Evans about its existence (of which he was unaware) and he showed much enthusiasm and interest in seeing it. As I work for the company and as they were about to have an 'open day' it was very easy to ask the EMI Music Archives Curator, Ruth Edge, to extend a welcome to him. He and his wife went to the 'open day' and Edward in particular was very touched to see, still in full working order, the very gramophone his father and Captain Scott had listened to some 80 years ago! The story of his visit and two photographs have already been published in EMI Music's "In-house" magazine *Off the Record*. (My thanks to Ruth Edge and the EMI Archive for permission to use the photographs)



Edward Broke Evans holding the well-known photo of the Siberian sledge dog 'Krisraviza' listening to 'His Master's Voice'



Edward Broke Evans about to play an HMV record on the 'Senior Monarch'

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS

by George Frow

In November 1993 only a week after a ninety-minute television programme on Channel 4 on his life and achievements Léon Thérémín (Lev Sergeivitch Terman) has died in Moscow at the age of 97.

Neither his name nor the instrument that bears it may strike the reader at first, but students of the HMV/Victor record catalogues of the 30s will recall four sides of the theremin and may have heard it on the sound-track of a number of Hollywood films such as: *Spellbound* (Hitchcock); *The Lost Weekend*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *It Came from Outer Space*, and in all it was used to give a 'spooky' effect.

It appeared as solo on the following records with piano or organ accompaniment:

HMV	Victor	released
B3626	22495	<i>Lover, Come Back to Me</i> <i>Dancing with Tears in My Eyes</i>
B8309	25130	<i>In a Monastery Garden</i> <i>Love Sends a Gift of Roses</i>

played by Lennington H. Shewell (later known as Forrest Whitley)

The theremin was a type of valve (or tube) oscillating instrument with two high frequency circuits, these being made audible through a speaker. It was 'space-controlled', moving the right hand near a vertical antenna regulated the pitch, and the left near a horizontal metal loop controlled volume, playing only one note at a time over a range of 4½ octaves. The sound emitted was not unlike human humming or perhaps a one-string fiddle and it could play solo or be accompanied by orchestral instruments and was excellent for dreamy pieces such as those listed above, but was not practical for anything staccato. It was advertised as *Music out of the Air or Ether Harmonics*.

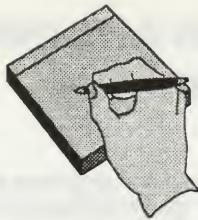
Léon Thérémín, sometimes called 'The Soviet Edison' settled in New York in the 20s in a brownstone building still standing at 37 West 54th Street, where in a studio/laboratory this musical instrument was developed as well as many other electrical devices considered advanced for the time; it was taken up by Victor who offered it from about 1931 onwards with an introductory sound film of Thérémín playing it. Soon after, in a concert at Carnegie Hall 10 theremins formed an orchestra and played suitably adapted music, and in 1945 Stokowski conducted a Concerto for Thérémín and Orchestra, featuring Clara Rockmore, then and still the instrument's virtuoso. A *Fantasy* for it was also composed by Martinu.

Thérémín had designed the first practical sound synthesizer and in a televised interview Robert Moog declared his admiration for the instrument and admitted building a number of copies in his 'teens, each better than the last, before progressing to a transistorized synthesizer.

Léon Thérémín's stay in New York stopped abruptly in the 30s when Soviet agents abducted him back to Russia where he spent years in a labour camp. It was reckoned he had probably died in 1945 but on a visit to Moscow Clara Rockmore by a strange chance found he was still living there and relaxation of borders led to a return trip to America where in 1991 he was awarded the Centennial Medal by Stanford University.

A theremin has been noticed not long ago in an American collection and one survives in playable condition in a mechanical sound museum in Moscow where the inventor was shown playing it, and Clara Rockmore appeared to have more than one. About 30 years ago the writer recalls Forrest Whitley in London giving him and the family a personal explanation and demonstration, and playing *Trees*.

LETTERS



Buyers' Guide to Gramophones?

Dear Chris,

As one of your new members, can I say what an interesting pastime collecting gramophones is proving to be. My collection so far is quite modest, but the other day I saw in a local antique shop, the first gramophone I have seen locally for sale which has an external horn. There are quite a few portables around, and one or two large 'sideboard' types, but all with a built-in horn.

Needless to say I had to go into the shop and have a closer look. The impression I now have is that when you are looking at something for the first time, you really find out how little you know about the subject, and I left the shop without buying it, my visit having raised more questions than it answered.

Whilst the horn was very similar to the Junior Monarch of late 1904, as was the cabinet, it didn't have a tapered tone arm like the Monarch, the cabinet had the HMV logo on it, and the sound-box had a perforated metal shield, which I believe wasn't introduced until 1925. The dealer said that he thought that everything was original, but he couldn't vouch for the cabinet. I also thought that the asking price of £200 was low, suggesting to me that the machine wasn't exactly as it should be.

What would be very helpful - and I don't know if one exists - is a checklist for potential buyers of gramophone, which lists certain key dates when new developments were introduced i.e. built-in horns. Another example would be the date when machines stopped having the Gramophone Company logo and started with the HMV Nipper logo, and also the dates when the different sound-boxes were introduced.

Any assistance in this matter would be gratefully accepted, also any comments as to whether I have just passed up a bargain!

Yours sincerely,

Gary P. Jackson, Southampton

(Gary has raised an important issue that affects many new entrants to our hobby. At the moment there is a paucity of publications about machines. I would however refer him to the C.L.P.G.S. Cirencester Exhibition Catalogue which describes many machines. There is also George Frow's excellent book on *Edison Disc Phonographs* and Benet

Bergonzi's booklet on *Old Gramophones*. These publications (B204, B202 and B131) are available from the Society's booklist at £5.50, £15.00 and £2.40 respectively. It is also worth seeking out the following publications on the second-hand market: *Collecting Phonographs and Gramophones* by Christopher Proudfoot (one of the best introductions to our hobby I have come across), *The Illustrated History of Talking Machines* by Daniel Marty (excellent photographs but I am not so sure that the text is totally accurate), and *van muziekdoos...tot grammofoon* by Verzameling De Caluwé (a catalogue of the talking machines at Stedelijk Museum, Sint-Niklaas, Belgium) (the illustrations are excellent but one slight disadvantage is that the text is in a dialect of the Dutch language). Another excellent publication worth seeking out on the second-hand market is Ernie Bayly's book *The EMI Collection*. If anyone else can offer Gary some advice please write to me care of myself and I will pass on the correspondence. Ed.)

Violet Essex

Dear Chris,

In response to my letter in *Hillendale News* No.195, December 1993, which included an appeal for more information about Encore Records, I received a letter from Paul Cleary of Leeds in which he gave details of Encore E 816. This extends the E 800 series by another six discs. E 816 has London recordings on one side and a side from the German Veni-Vidi-Vici labelled records of the Beka Record Company of Berlin, with the III Garde Regiment, Berlin.

The London recordings have the main Beka matrix number 40844 (which was a "want" in my 40000 series listing) with a sub-Encore matrix number of 562. This gives us another title for the Violet Essex discography in *If no one ever marries me* composed by Liza Lehmann. The second title on this side is *Valse in D flat*, with no composer given, played by Henry Geehl on the piano. {Could it be Chopin? Ed.}

I would still like to have more information about **Encore Records** in the 550 series, except for 551, 552 and in the E 800 series, except for E 800, E 805, E 807, E 810 and E 816.

I would like the matrix numbers for 563 (which is definitely the catalogue number, and not a matrix number, as the four titles are all from the Veni-Vidi-Vici label, but which I have been unable to trace and should be in the 750 matrix series).

I have all Veni-Vidi-Vici matrices from 750 to 798 except for 781, so that may well one of the sides with the other at 799 or beyond on Encore 563. (Other known Veni-Vidi-Vici matrices are 823, 826 and 827.)

Yours sincerely,

Frank Andrews, Neasden, London

Castles, Essex and the A40

Dear Chris,

I was most interested in Frank Andrews' letter concerning the above singers. I consulted the 1933 edition of *Who's Who* and it gave Amy Castles birthplace (presumably supplied by her) as Carlton, Victoria, 1882. I was living in Melbourne during the mid-1960s, and seem to recall Carlton as in Greater Melbourne.

I am grateful to Frank for his information about Violet Essex on Encore. Some time ago, I was sent from Minnesota a tape which included her singing *Coming Thro' the Rye* and *Dear Heart*. Nice to know more about Encore, a label I have never encountered.

I have just bought a most unusual record, made by Levy's Sound Studios Ltd., London W.1, and numbered 412. It is a 12" disc bearing the emblem of the Austin Motor Company, with matrices 11265 and 11266 in the wax. On side 1 is printed the date 'Oct. 47' and both sides bear the warning: 'CONFIDENTIAL. Not to be performed publicly.' It is a white label with black lettering, the edge having a stroboscopic design, just as Sterno once had.

On side 1, Mr L. P. Lord (later Sir Leonard) announces the Austin A40, with a message to Austin Distributors and Dealers.' On the reverse side (undated) 'Mr George Eyston describes the performance of the new Austin A40 models.' This was Captain G. E. T. Eyston, the famous racing motorist.

If anyone would like this taped, just a send a cassette in a Jiffy bag, plus postage, and I'll be happy to oblige.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Cliffe, [REDACTED]
Hitchin, Herts. SG5 2UL.

Phonographs in Aeroplanes

Dear Chris,

I was most interested to see George Taylor's letter and picture in *Hillandale News* 195.

The phonograph shown is in fact a Dictaphone, which was a descendant (by way of the American Graphophone Company) of the Graphophone, with 160 t.p.i. and 6" long cylinder. The artist has drawn the machine rather too clearly, as the low case shows it to be a 1930s model of Dictaphone!

So that model is unlikely to have been installed in a 1914 aeroplane; 1920s Dictaphones had a much taller case, and I am not even sure they were around in 1914. The Edison Business Phonograph came out in 1908, but when was the first Dictaphone?

Yours sincerely,

Paul Collenette, Reading, Berks.

Which Phillips?

Dear Mr Hamilton,

In a recent edition of *Hillandale News* you printed a letter from a Mr Barry Badham of Pymble, N.S.W., Australia. Among other questions he asked if the composer of the song *Wimmen! Oh, Wimmen!* as recorded by the New Zealand bass Oscar Natzke was Montague Phillips. It is shown on the label as simply "Phillips".

Well, it was not. It is by H. Lyall Phillips and the words were written by someone called D. Dickinson. The song was composed (or at least published) in 1920. I have never been able to find out anything about D. Dickinson and not a lot more about H. Lyall Phillips, not even his birth and death dates. He seems to have been quite a prolific composer of British ballads in the 1910s and 1920s, at least 49 of which are held in the British Library Music Collection in London. For some he created both the music and lyrics (*A Devonshire Wedding* is an excellent example) but for the most part he relied on other writers, probably the most noteworthy being F. E. Weatherly. Several had been sung in concerts by Malcolm McEarchern but *Wimmen!* was featured by Charles Tree (long before Natzke came along and recorded it in London in early 1940). Interestingly enough it seems that the Parlophone disc was one of several recorded by Natzke around this time that were never released in the U. K., only in Australia/New Zealand, probably to coincide with his concert tours here in 1940-41.

More than that, I regret I do not know. However if any of your readers have additional information about either Mr Lyall Phillips or the mysterious D. Dickinson, I'd be very grateful if they would share it with me. I have been researching Natzke and his recordings for many years and every little bit helps.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Downes, Wellington, New Zealand.

The Earliest Born Person to Record?

Dear Chris,

Has anyone ever answered the question - who was the earliest born person to record? Naturally this question divides itself up into various sub-categories:

- 1) Who was the world's earliest born person reputed to have recorded?
- 2) Who was the world's earliest born person to have recorded, whose recorded effort survives?
- 3) Who was the world's earliest born person to make a commercially issued record?
- 4, 5 & 6) Would be the same questions but substituting Britain for the world.

My nominations for 5 & 6 would be Alfred, Lord Tennyson born 1809 and Joseph Taylor whose records for G&T were made in July 1908 when he was 75, so he was born in 1833.

Best wishes,
Bill Dean-Myatt, Sutton Coldfield

{I think the earliest born person to have made a commercially issued cylinder was Pope Leo XIII, who was born in 1910. He recorded a cylinder for Bettini in February 1903 (see *Hillandale News* 186, June 1992) which was subsequently transferred to disc and issued in that form. To my knowledge the earliest born person to have made a commercially issued disc was Sir John George Tollermache Sinclair, who recorded for Columbia, G&T and Odeon (all in 1906). He was born in 1825. If anyone can supply any more names and details please let me know. Ed.}

Rex 8905

Dear Sir,

When I bought a 10" 78 at a car boot sale recently, I noticed some names scratched on the wax around the labels on both sides. These proved to be the signatures of the artists performing on the record and I was very pleased with my purchase thinking it was a "one-off". I have since, however, seen two others, so the etching must be on the master.

Am I to assume that, after the recording session, all eight artists signed the master with a pointed instrument? The record in question is Rex 8905, *Gracie's and Sandy's Party* (1936). The artists are Gracie Fields, Charlie Kunz, Jay Wilbur, Larry Adler, Sandy Powell, Reginald Dixon, Primo Scala and Joe Petersen.

Yours truly,
David Riches, Feltham, Middlesex.

What machine is it?

Dear Chris,

I enclose photographs of my rather large cabinet machine in response to Peter Heath's daughter's sideboard featured in readers' letters in the October 1993 issue of *Hillandale News*.

My machine is about the same size and also in mahogany, with decorative mouldings on the front. The motor-board hinges from the front, has a Garrard double-spring motor and a Meltrope soundbox. Two locking drawers and two record storage cabinets are included. Winding is via the central door, which covers the mouth of the internal horn. I have not seen another machine of this type and I hope a reader can put a name to it. Could it have been made for a customer by a department store?

Yours sincerely,
Stan North, Sevenoaks, Kent

Baird Televisor Discs

Dear Editor,

In reply to Martyn Dowell's letter in *Hillandale News* 195 on the subject of Baird Televisor Discs, I can supply the following pieces of information.

According to an article in *New Scientist* (20th October 1983, pp 206-7), the Phonovision system was patented by Baird in October 1926 and some test recordings were made in 1927/28 at the hair-raising speed of 250rpm! These consisted of (mostly stationary shots of a doll's head and they appear not to have been released to the public. Surviving examples indicate some kind of sync-problem within the system, and I understand that some computer processing was necessary to extract any sort of picture from them.

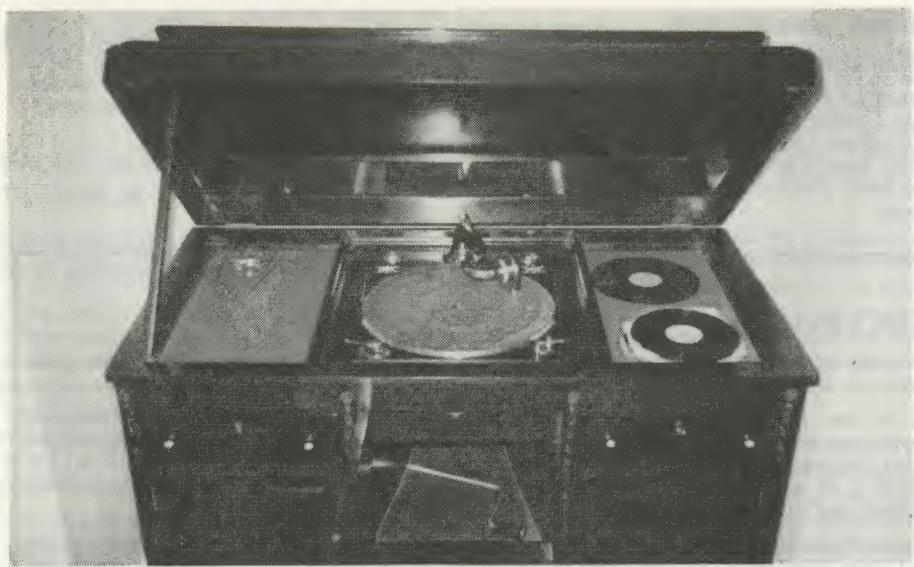
A few years later in 1935 a similar type of disc was produced by the Major Radiovision Company and sold through Selfridges for 7/-. This time the speed was 78rpm and the recording was a series of stills: caricatures of assorted celebrities. It was branded *Recorded Television Record* and a picture of the label can be seen in my recently published effort *The English 78 Picture Book*.

For those who are interested, I can supply the above book for \$39.50 plus the exorbitant postage of \$19.00. More about this anon!

Yours sincerely,

Don Taylor, [REDACTED] Mount Stuart, Tasmania 7000, Australia

{See also McLean, D F Using a micro to process 30 line Baird television recordings (*Wireless World*, Oct 1983, pp 66-70). Ed.}



A view of the motor-board of the gramophone described in Stan North's letter



A view of the front of the same gramophone

Sterno Gramophones

Dear Mr Hamilton,

I wonder if anyone can help me with details of the history and/or workings of the *Sterno* make of gramophone. I have a cabinet model which, unfortunately, needs a great deal of winding in order to play one side of a record. Does this suggest a weakened spring?

I am reluctant to attempt investigations or repair without prior knowledge of the machine. I understand, also, that there was a record label with the same name and I am interested in finding out about this. Is there any connection with the gramophone?

Sincerely,

Phil Neary, Wirral, Merseyside

OBITUARIES

Jim Goodall

It is with regret that we have to announce the death on Christmas Day 1993 of Jim Goodall at the age of 82.

I first met Jim through the late Eddie Ferguson, who had advertised a meeting of gramophone enthusiasts at the *Pitscottie Inn*, near Cupar, Fife several years ago. We struck up an immediate accord and soon became good friends. Jim's enthusiasm led to the formation of the East Fife Branch of the C. L. P. G. S. He was unanimously elected the secretary of the new branch and he then proceeded to enrol several new members, including myself.

It soon became apparent that Jim was endowed with special talents which led to him becoming an expert at tuning sound-boxes. He was known throughout the Society for this and made several visits to the London Meetings to demonstrate his art. My own sound-boxes, which had been subjected to his treatment, bear witness to his superb craftsmanship, and since they sound as good today as they did when he returned them to me (especially the *Expert* sound-box on my E. M. Ginn *Expert Senior*).

It was through Jim that I met the late Douglas Fitzpatrick of Sheringham, Norfolk. I saw at first hand the master technician at work when he and I were invited down to Sheringham as guests of Douglas. Jim repaired many of Douglas' damaged sound-boxes and we heard them demonstrated to their full effect on Douglas' monster gramophone. Jim had even used modern substitutes for diaphragms when the original material was unavailable. Jim subsequently wrote an article on this unique machine for *Hillendale News*.

I have lost a friend, and the Society has lost a valued member who will be sadly missed. Our condolences go to his widow, Marie.

Chris Hamilton

Brian Gould

It is with sorrow that we have to report that Brian Gould died at his home in London in mid-November 1993.

I first met him about 1954, when both of us were members of a South London gramophone society. He was then also a member of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society and introduced me to one of its monthly gatherings at the *Horse and Groom* in Curtain Road. This was about 1955 and I soon became a member. Brian was an occasional visitor to our house at Sydenham and we made several collecting forays and family outings together.

A long spell of ill-health and hospital treatment struck Brian in the 1960s and led to early retirement from a position in insurance, but this gave him more opportunity to collect operatic and other types of records. His tastes were fairly broad; I recall an interest in and authority of Elgar's music and a remarkable occasion at a quiz where he swept the board in a competition by putting the correct names to extracts from 10 different Rossini overtures.

This broad musical knowledge helped him when he was involved with *The Gramophone Classical Record Catalogue* for many years.

In recent years Brian was always to be seen moving about among his many friends at the Wandsworth and Wimbledon record bazaars, and his cheerful, openness and sound qualities will be missed by those of us who knew him.

George Frow

REVIEWS

FROM GALWAY TO DUBLIN

Early recordings of Traditional Irish Music

From Galway to Dublin is coast to coast in Ireland, west to east that is, and is the title of an exciting cassette/CD of 25 "tracks" as they are called these days, sides to us old '78' chaps, of Traditional Irish song and dance music. These were recorded originally between 1921 and 1950 in the US, London and Dublin and by various companies.

Side One begins with a vaudeville type sketch *Sightseeing tour from Galway to Dublin* with Dan Sullivan's Shamrock band with a demonic type of laughter provided by Larry Griffin. Leo Rowsome "the king of Uileann pipers" comes next followed by Frank Quinn singing *The Wicklow Mountains High*. Quinn was a prolific recorder and some of his earlier records labelled him as "Patrolman Quinn". Flute duets are none too common but here's a fine one by Meahan and McKenna recorded in 1937. Peter Conlon's accordion solo of the jig *The Banks of Newfoundland* is lively and I found myself rewinding the tape to hear it again. If you like violin solos there's plenty of them in this lot with Denis Murphy, Neil O'Boyle, Paddy Killoran, Michael Coleman and James Morrison. I couldn't pick the best one - they are all excellent.

Delia Murphy (1903-1971) was a singer of ballads whose recording career began just before the second world war and I am certain she must have added a pretty penny to the purses of The Gramophone Co. Ltd. But I have never heard her song *The Boston Burglar* as clear and fresh as it sounds here. There are other fine singers on this cassette too. Murty Rabbett - from County Galway, singing in New York in 1922, James J. Mullen who made many records, was known as "The Singing Insurance Man" (if you fancy that title) while at another stage in his career he was labelled "High Chief Ranger for the USA Irish National Foresters".



But by whatever name he was known it would be hard not to enjoy his song *Let Mister Maguire Sit Down*. There's some fine Uileann Pipe music and not to be missed is a piano solo by Eleanor Kane recorded in 1935. She is one of the few Irish piano players to play melodies of dance tunes with ornamentation. She is still active in Chicago.

There are extensive notes with this cassette/CD. They give a short history of the recording of Irish Traditional music and then go on to give both information on the piece and the artist in each cases. For those who feel like breaking into song, the words for the songs are there too! A pity that the original record catalogue numbers for the pieces were not included.

Personally, I like this presentation a lot; the sound is the best I've heard. The notes are by Dick Spottsworth and Philippe Varlet who also produced the cassette/CD. Sound restoration is by Jack Towns and mastered at Phoenix, Arizona by Rodger Seibel.

Available from **Rounder Records**, One Camp Street, Cambridge Mass. 02140, USA.

Michael Hegarty

C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

Item B 50 HMV 1930 Instrument and Accessories Catalogue has been reprinted and is now available price £6 incl. U.K. postage.

Item B 210 Hayes on Record - The story of the manufacture of records & tapes at E.M.I.'s Hayes factory, edited by Peter Hall and Colin Brown. Paperback with over 200 pages and many illustrations is now available price £8 incl. U.K. postage.

Both can be ordered (foreign orders please add 10%) from the address below:

Don Moore,

[REDACTED]
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Lincolnshire LN7 6RX

The Victory Bands (1928 - 31)

Part 1

The Victory Band was a generic name for several of the bands who recorded for the Victory label (the 7" record introduced by the Crystalate Manufacturing Co. Ltd. in 1928). This label was sold by Woolworths at the incredibly low price of 6d. Crystalate issued copyright material on one side of the record and non-copyright material on the other. The bands on this cassette who used the Victory Band pseudonym were George Cathie and his Band, Harry Macquity Band, The Band of His Majesty's Irish Guards and Petersen's Band.

I enjoyed listening to many tunes of yesteryear that are almost totally forgotten today. *Vale of Health March*, *Kindergarten Polka*, *Cornelius March* and *Real Ow'd Lancashire Clog Dance* were performed by George Cathie and his Band. *Yoik and Vivette - One Step* were ably played by Petersen's Band. His Majesty's Irish Guards gave spirited versions of *Turkish Patrol* and *Irish Jigs*. The cassette ends with a performance of a version of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture that defies description! It is worth buying the cassette for this alone!

One unusual feature that Poppy Records offer is the choice of a cassette with narrated notes (useful for those who are blind or whose eyesight is failing) or one with conventional printed notes. Adrian Tuddenham has made an excellent job of the transfers. I have never heard 7" Victory records sound so well. The original recordings were of poor quality and it must have been extremely difficult to find good quality original pressings. This cassette is a worthy tribute to Adrian's skill as a transfer engineer and I can thoroughly recommend it. It is available (Cat. No. Poppy Records GXP001/N or GXP001) from **Poppy Records**, 88 Mount Road, Southdown, Bath, Somerset BA2 1LH price £5.99 including post and packing.

Chris Hamilton

A Concert of Lambert Cylinders

This well-produced cassette contains 20 tracks of transfers of Lambert Cylinders of various sorts. Several of the tracks are devoted to the Metropolitan Band, the London Regimental Band, the Bohemian Band and an anonymous band. Items like *The Ben Hur Chariot Race*, *Hands across the Sea*, *The Elephant and the Mosquito*, *The Man behind the Gun* and *Dream and Remember* are performed by them. These bands give spirited renditions of tunes that are seldom heard these days.

S. H. Dudley and Harry Macdonough are heard in splendid form, the former singing *I'm the Man that Makes the Money in the Mint* and the latter singing the *Heidelberg Stein Song* from *The Prince of Pilsen*. They also are heard together in a duet *When the Birds Go North Again*. Billy Murray sings *Up in a Cocoanut Tree* - another fine rendition. There is also a recording of Charles D'Almaine (violin) playing Raff's *Cavatina*. This I found the least satisfactory of the cylinders on this cassette. It suffered from severe wow and flutter, caused, I suspect, by the original cylinder having become warped. Signor Carlos Francisco (alias Emilio de Gorzoza) gives an excellent performance of *The Holy City*. The cassette concludes with Mme. Noldi singing *The Waltz Song* from Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*.

All in all I found this cassette most enjoyable and I can recommend it to all who enjoy listening to cylinders. The transfers are well done and the cylinders sound just as though they are being played on my own phonographs. They were done by Michael R. Payer, who used minimal filtering. The notes are excellent and make reference to many publications which have published work on Lambert cylinders (including our own *Hillandale News*). Finally I would like to compliment Definitive Transfers, who published this cassette, on their choice of tape. They have used Maxell *XLII*, which to my mind, is one of best tapes to use for this purpose, and this tape has an excellent cassette and mechanics which are far superior to the cheap products used by the majority of record companies for their audio-cassette issues.

This cassette is available at \$15 plus post and packing from **Definitive Transfers**, 550 Franklin Avenue suite B-6, Hartford, Ct 06114, U. S. A.

Chris Hamilton

REPORTS

London Meeting, September 16th 1993

For our September meeting, Frank Andrews presented the second part of his *We Have Our Own Records*. He continued on to the Bs and Cs of record labels issued by British Companies. As usual, this was researched as only Frank can do; a description and synopsis accompanied each slide with some recordings played to entertain the audience.

Naturally some of the labels were rather unusual and rarely encountered today. Examples of these were *Bahram*, *Baldwin Chemical Industries*, *The Belchers' Club Record* (the audience were disappointed when Frank did not play that one!), *Beta Record* and then one of the companies with a half-moon sticker *Blue Seal Record* which was stuck over *Pioneer* and *Coliseum Records*.

Blue Star Records had a successful design for a label that issued mainly jazz recordings. Another label that specialised in jazz was Columbia's *Clef Series*.

Bob-o-Link Record may sound similar but is different from *The Bob Record* which used our old shilling as its design. One of the London music publishers Boosey and Hawkes issued their own discs; later on they became Boosey and Hawkes Ltd. *Bosworth Records* came with either light or dark blue coloured labels. Scala issued a *Bouwmeester Record*. The audience heard a *Boy Scouts Association Record*, which consisted of camp fire songs specially recorded to show how things were done!



The *B.R.C. label* was shown followed by a *Bringing Christ To The Nation Record*. Another design was the *Britannic Record* illustrating Britannia complete with trident and shield. The next labels Frank discussed were the *British Drama League* and the *British Legion Record* (a disc pictorially decorated with portraits and scenes connected with the Second World War).

Some companies' labels are often scarce due to their short exposure to public sale, but the *British Phototone Record*, which was synchronised for use with specially made short films, was probably never on sale to the general public (this was not a novelty as Edison had experimented with such ideas at the turn of the century).

There are many British labels like *British Polyphon Record* (different from the pre-1914 *Polyphon* label which originated in Germany), *The British Rhythm Society*, *The British Song Society* and *The British Union of Fascists*. A *Burlington Record* had an illustration of a famous London landmark as its design.

That product of the 20th century the *Billy Butlin Holiday Camp* had its own record to remind you of your visit. *Butterfly* was a successful label and could be found stuck over *Popular*, *Grammavox* and *Cameo* records. Frank was not able to play us *The Canned Beer Chorus Record*. He then talked about *The Carnival 1930 Record* and the *Castle record* (closely connected with *Beltona Records*) and *Celebrity record* (closely connected with *Dominion Records*).

Another of the well-known London music publishers, Chappell and Co. issued their own records on the *Chappell Record* label and the *Chappell de Luxe Record* label. Chappell and Co. later became the distributors of the *Brunswick Clithophone Record* in the British Isles. This label was issued with Black, Green, Blue, Violet and Gold labels. The *Brunswick Clithophone* label eventually metamorphosed into the *British Brunswick Ltd.* label. Chappell and Co. also issued

Chappell Special Records and *Chappell Recorded Music records*.

Another label mentioned by Frank was the *Cherubini Society* record, but he did not have an example to let us listen to. He ended his programme with an example of the *Childrens Special Service Mission*.

In all 64 illustrations were enjoyed by those present. Once again we can only thank Frank for sharing the results of his researches with us. Thanks are due also to Len Watts for ably working the slide projector. We all look forward to Frank revealing more of his discoveries to us at a future date.

G.W.

London Meeting, December 16th 1993

The Christmas meeting in London is always open to members to come along and talk about a record, or a tape or two that they have brought with them, normally on a pre-agreed theme. This year it was Double Acts, and if we had the odd solo or trio, the arithmetic balanced comfortably. The members' introductions to their records inevitably evoked a response from the floor and at the end we all went home a bit wiser.

Needless to say some of the recordings were up to 90 years old:

A marriage has been arranged (The Cingalee) w. Isabel Jay and Louis Bradfield, G&T 4732 (1905)

Paradise for Two (Maid of the Mountains) w. Peter Dawson and Bessie Jones, HMV B 805 (1917)

If You were the only Girl in the World (The Bing Boys are Here) w. George Robey and Violet Lorraine, Columbia L 1035 (1916)

Wilkinson and the Ledger Clerk (sketch from Hullo Tango) w. Eric Roper and Morris Harvey, HMV 01106 (1914)

Wave to me, Wave w. Clarkson Rose, Olive Fox and unidentified pianist Zonophone, 5026 (1926)

Gert & Daisy make a Christmas Pudding w. Elsie & Doris Waters, Columbia FB 1186 (1935)

Gendarmes Duet (Genevieve de Brabant) w. Walter Glynne and Stuart Robertson, HMV B 3030 (1930)

Letter Song (Marriage of Figaro) w. Emma Eames and Marcella Sembrich, HMV DK 121 (1908)

Costers' Courtship w. Duncan & Godfrey, Regal G 6557 (1914)

Some of these will be familiar but nobody could add any information on the pair Duncan & Godfrey whose act was in a Cockney style that hasn't been heard in the East End for several generations. The comedian Eric Roper had reached the London Hippodrome by 1914, but was killed in France two years later. In their ways Glynne & Robertson and Eames and Sembrich showed beautiful style in very different music.

There were other records played and then we saw slides and heard the result of Len Watts' researches into the origins of an obscure whimsical song *Dingle Dongle Bell*; this was a solo performance by Margaret Cooper (G&T 3831, October 1909) who had sung it at the Palace Theatre, London at that time.

One enigma that still remains to be solved is the identity of a soprano of professional standard in an unknown song on a G&T sample pressing of 1903 that has no listing in the files at Hayes.

The evening was made the more pleasant by the presence of seasonal refreshment.

A London Correspondent

National Phonofair at St.Matthew's Church Hall, Wolverhampton on Saturday 25th September 1993

This event, organised by the Midland Group this year, followed a traditional pattern with many stalls selling machines, records, accessories and ephemera. There was an exhibition of members' own gramophones and phonographs followed by the Society's AGM. The AGM was reported on in the last issue.

Many of the senior Society members attended with their wives and friends. The fine weather may well have contributed along with the light, airy and cheery church hall. This all made a successful day.

Most of the traders had healthy sales and the excellent catering was supplied by Shirley Farley and her assistant. The exhibition of machines incorporated a "Concours d'Élegance". As usual this was divided into two parts - the best phonograph and the best gramophone. Those present were provided with ballot cards to place their votes for each category. Fred Perks won first prize in both with his superb "Chalet" Edison Diamond Disc table model and his Amberola 50 phonograph.

A highlight of the day was featured when Paul Morris of the Miller-Morris Partnership arranged for the principal members of the Midlands Group to record a cylinder where each in turn spoke a few words into the recording horn, followed by a chorus of assembled members. It is hoped that copies of this cylinder will be available in due course.

Geoff Howl

Midlands Group Meeting held at Carrs Lane Methodist Centre, Birmingham on Saturday 20th November 1993

There was a good turn-out in spite of the wintry weather and members were soon engaged in the usual trading and intensely involved gramophonic and phonographic chat.

Richard Taylor brought along a rather nice Edison Fireside Phonograph (not seen very often these days as machines have become too valuable to move around the place frequently). This is so different from the earlier days of our meetings when several machines were on show with some changing hands. There was one famous occasion when our good friend, the late Jack Maloney from Manchester, brought along about 12 Edison Gem Phonographs - and every one was different in some feature!

The entertainment for the evening was a joint programme on cassette from Jerry Lee (aged 79) and Peter Dempsey. They each in turn introduced two items, with suitable humorous anecdotes and we were surprised in many instances with the choice of music, aware as we are of their serious leanings (mainly vocal recordings).

To illustrate the point Jerry not only introduced John McCormack and Gigli but also Ella Fitzgerald, the Ink Spots and Deanna Durbin among others. Peter introduced Caruso and then Jimmy Durante, Adelaide Hall, Harry Roy and Max Miller, to name a few.

A stage-managed finale to their programme saw them pretending to have trouble with a tape of the two of them duetting *Somewhere a Voice is Calling*, so they decided to give us a live performance of this instead.

A superb evening, a well produced programme and the audience loved every minute of it. Thanks lads.

Geoff Howl

C.L.P.G.S. BALANCE SHEET (YEAR 1/8/92 to 31/7/93)

Receipts	Payments
Bank account balances b/f 10,614.00	
Income:	Outgoings:
Subs (Sterling) 7561.00	H&D Printing 4558.00
Adverts 1592.00	Book purchases & printing 2070.00
Book sales 2442.00	Computer Software & maintenance 1133.00
Transfer from US a/c 3404.00	Postage & Stationery 3082.00
Miscellaneous 1071.00	Miscellaneous (incl. insurance & hire of meeting room) 1340.00
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Programme 1993/94

1993

Sept 14	THE MARCHESI SCHOOL OF SINGING	John Freestone
Sept 28	MEMOIRS OF A VOX-HUNTING MAN	Joe Winstanley
Oct 12	LAND OF LOST CONTENT	John T. Hughes
Oct 26	HISTORIC MASTERS	Stanley Henig
Nov 9	THE LANGUAGE DOES MATTER	David Mason
Nov 23	ANOTHER LOOK IN AT THE MET	Henry Hymos
Dec 14	REPENTANCES	John Steane

1994

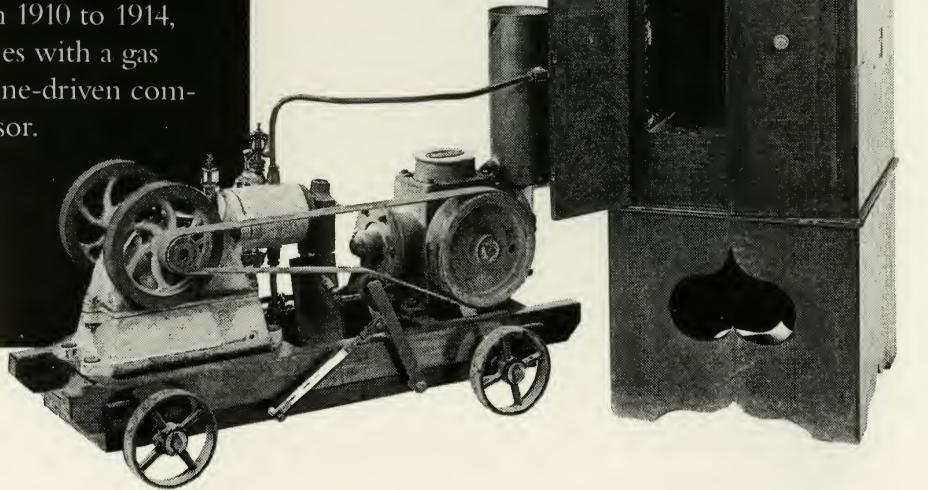
Jan 11	BULLSEYE EVERY TIME	Aubrey Levey
Jan 25	ROUGHLY 78	Keith Hardwick
Feb 8	YESTERDAY OR TODAY - WHO WINS?	Alan Blyth
Feb 22	OPERA BEFORE THE WAR	Ray Farrar
Mar 8	SINGERS OF RIMSKY-KORSAKOV	Paul Lewis
Mar 22	"WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED"	Denis Page
April 12	CHANGING TASTES	Alan Bilgora
April 26	MEMORIES OF ITALY AND ELSEWHERE	Alfred Orda
May 10	(a) A.G.M. (b) COMMEMORATIONS	Graham Bridges
May 24	SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE	Vivian Liff
June 14	AMERICAN ARCHIVES - A LUCKY DIP	Tom Peel
June 28	VOICES I HAVE LOVED	Peter Dempsey
July 12	DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES	Paddy Byrne

All Meetings begin at 7.00p.m. and normally close at 9.00p.m.

MEMBERSHIP: £12.00 payable to the Hon. Treasurer at the meetings
ATTENDANCE FEE per meeting: MEMBERS 50p (inc. coffee) VISITORS £2.00 (inc. coffee)
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